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Disarmament Commission
245th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Ms. Quarless ..... (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Coutts (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its current session. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

I should like at the outset to say that my country considers that this Commission plays a special role as a deliberative body of the multilateral disarmament machinery. The issues with which we will again be dealing during this session — nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures — will again require a constructive spirit on the part of all. The opportunity to develop those themes in depth, together with the universality of the composition of this Commission, are essential elements that we must exploit.

Chile holds firm convictions with regard to disarmament and security. They are based on the guiding principle of human security and on the indivisibility of international security and its pre-eminence over the requirements of individual States. As we have said in other forums, national security does not exist in isolation and cannot be invoked to undermine the security of others.

Having said that, and in the context of nuclear disarmament, we should like to draw attention to the impasse in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

As we said when we presided over the Conference, while there is a collective responsibility to pursue the objective, that responsibility is obviously not equally distributed among all States. We must therefore again express our conviction that the countries that have opted for armament and nuclear deterrence have a much greater responsibility. It is in that vein that we also regret the marked inclination towards unilateralism by the principal international protagonists.

However, we can place some hope in the outcome of the most recent Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in particular the unequivocal commitment formulated by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards the total elimination of stockpiles. We consider it necessary to stress that the actions and rights arising from the Treaty constitute, for all parties, a clear programme of action to achieve total abolition. We in no way wish to continue to accept an international order based on the perpetuation of the right of a small number of States to possess those arms.

That is why we insist on the validity of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in underscoring the obligation to undertake in good faith and conclude these negotiations under strict international control.

Lastly, we join all those countries that defend the validity of and the need to observe the principle of the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament and the control of these and related weapons.

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With respect to confidence-building measures, we wish to point out that, in our region — and in our subregion, the southern cone, in particular — these have greatly helped to forge a climate of friendship, good-neighbourliness and growing physical and economic integration. We must also stress, however, that those measures are based on shared values.

In effect, within the framework of the Organization of American States, as demonstrated in the Declarations of Santiago and El Salvador on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures — later reaffirmed in the Plan of Action of the second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago in April 1998, and in the political declaration establishing a zone of peace in the Common Market of the South — it is ineluctably evident that there is a need to strengthen and defend representative democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and of good governance, transparency, social progress and the protection of the environment as essential elements in safeguarding peace and security in the hemisphere.

Regarding the projection of confidence-building measures in our subregion, we feel it important to underscore, reiterating what was said by the representative of Argentina yesterday, that our two countries have benefited since 1994 from the implementation of a number of such measures. They have allowed the launching of an integration process unprecedented in our lengthy shared history. Among them, one example to be highlighted is the standing security committee created in 1995 to enhance bilateral cooperation in those areas, with the joint participation of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Defence of both countries.

In general, the implementation of confidence-building measures in the area of defence depends on the parties' having sufficient political will to find points of convergence beyond national objectives that may clash with one another and to overcome antagonistic cultural attitudes and perceptions. As long as such measures promote neighbourly and regional stability, we can also build mutual confidence in areas that are similarly amenable to the adoption of such measures, such as the economy and political relations. In this context, we should also like to congratulate our colleague from Argentina, Mrs. Martinic, Chairperson of Working Group II, for the rapid drafting and distribution of the working document. We believe that it is an excellent basis for the development of our deliberations.

In conclusion, allow me to express our complete readiness to cooperate to ensure that the Commission will produce the results we all expect.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on behalf of the delegation of Cuba, for your well-deserved election, especially as you represent a brother Caribbean country to which we are joined by bonds of friendship. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

I also wish to recognize the excellent work done last year by Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as Chairman of the Commission.

We are satisfied by the swift response to the situation created as a result of the problems experienced by the regional Group that was to assume the chairmanship of the Commission this year, which was resolved thanks to the speed with which the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States produced a suitable slate to assume that responsibility. We hope that, in the future, the regional Groups will continue to make every possible effort to select candidates to the chairmanship when it is their turn, in accordance with the principle of geographic rotation.

The final outcome of the deliberations on the two substantive issues on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission will depend to a large extent on the progress we achieve during this session. For Cuba, nuclear disarmament is and will continue to be the supreme priority in disarmament, as has been agreed by all Member States for over 20 years.

In practice, the Disarmament Commission is currently the sole deliberative forum in which all States Members of the United Nations participate to discuss issues associated with the specific ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. We cannot afford the luxury of wasting this opportunity. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has not even been able to agree on a programme of work for the past four years.

In such circumstances, it is particularly important that deliberations on the nuclear issue on our agenda be aimed at adopting concrete recommendations on how to advance towards nuclear disarmament. The Commission cannot become a mere academic forum

detached from the realities of the world. The achievement of consensus cannot be an objective in itself, but must rather be a means to arrive at tangible solutions to the real problems that exist today in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. In order to do this, however, we need above all the political will of all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

It is illogical that some, alleging that the cold war has ended, should question the top priority that nuclear disarmament continues to enjoy, given that there are more than 35,000 nuclear weapons threatening the very existence of humanity and that obsolete doctrines of security based on the possession of such weapons continue to thrive.

While, on the one hand, the nuclear Powers undertake unequivocally — in theory — to adopt practical measures to advance towards nuclear disarmament, in the real world those promises have yet to be fulfilled. Of even greater concern, the practical actions that have been undertaken contradict the commitments assumed. Suffice it to mention just a few examples.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is maintaining and developing its New Strategic Concept, which increases, rather than decreases, the role of nuclear weapons in its security planning. Despite the clear opposition of the international community, it insists on the establishment of a national anti-missile defence system, in flagrant violation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems. This would reopen the door to an arms race, including in outer space.

A special committee on nuclear disarmament with a mandate to carry out negotiations has still not been established within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, despite the numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in that regard.

It is increasingly clear that there is a lack of political will on the part of some States to heed the appeal made in the Millennium Declaration to convene an international conference on nuclear disarmament.

Global military expenditures are again increasing at an accelerated rate. Following the 2.1 per cent increase in military expenditures in 1999, to $780 billion, a significant number of developed countries have already committed themselves publicly to maintain a constant rate of increase in their military budgets during the coming years. Only a portion of that money would serve to meet the needs of the 1.3 billion human beings who today live in the most inhuman sort of poverty.

At the same time, the qualitative development of nuclear arms continues unabated and the production of conventional weapons grows — the latter becoming ever more sophisticated and deadly. This growth is aimed at meeting political, military and commercial needs that have nothing to do with legitimate national security interests.

My delegation would like to express special thanks for the work done between sessions of the Disarmament Commission by Ms. Gabriela Martinic, the Chairperson of Working Group II, on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We are particularly gratified to have had her revised working paper at our disposal for several weeks now.

As that paper clearly sets out, specific ways of promoting confidence-building measures cannot be imposed; for while they may work quite well in certain countries and regions, they may not necessarily work in others. It is therefore fundamental to take adequate account of the individual characteristics of the context in which such measures are applied. Moreover, the development and implementation of confidence-building measures also assumes strict respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including, in particular, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a State, respect for sovereignty, non-use or threat of use of force, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the right to self-defence.

Little progress can be made towards establishing true confidence without eliminating the military threats and hostile and aggressive policies to which some States are subjected, or if military doctrines devised to intimidate other countries continue to be in force.

We believe that the revised working paper drafted by the Chairperson of Working Group II is an important step forward in our work that may serve as a good basis to guide discussion.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating to you, Madam Chairperson, the firm support of the delegation of Cuba for your work, as well as our full readiness to

contribute constructively to the success of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Alemán (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, as a member of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to express to you, Madam Chairperson, my great satisfaction at seeing you preside over our work. Your dedication and experience will make it possible for us to make progress in the right direction. I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the valuable opening remarks he made yesterday. Finally, I would like to add the voice of my delegation to those that have expressed gratitude for the work carried out last year by Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran.

The lethal invention of nuclear weapons coincided almost exactly with the founding of the United Nations. The race in nuclear and conventional arms has accompanied the growth of our Organization. If we consider that it was not just Governments but peoples that expressed in the San Francisco Charter their resolve to save future generations from the scourge of war, then we can understand why almost since its inception the United Nations has dedicated its main efforts to the obligatory task of disarmament in order to achieve its basic goal of safeguarding international peace and security.

It is clear that disarmament will not be achieved overnight, and that therefore it will have to be achieved gradually. But disarmament cannot be limited to half measures or isolated measures that do not affect the major players. That would be tantamount to promoting disarmament only among the disarmed. It is for this reason that at the Millennium Summit our heads of State and Government insisted on the need to attain the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear arms in particular. It is also the reason why they decided to keep all options open for the attainment of that lofty goal.

Although that is still a distant goal, important steps have been taken to put an end to the proliferation of nuclear arms and ban completely all types of nuclear tests. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace have also made valuable contributions to disarmament. Nevertheless, the relevant treaties establishing legally binding obligations still have not entered into force. I am referring to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In addition, it is regrettable that, due to the paralysis in the work of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva, it has not yet been possible to establish ad hoc committees on nuclear disarmament and fissile materials. Likewise, the fragile strategic balance that exists between nuclear-weapon States continues to be source of concern — a situation that poses the risk of setting off a new and unwanted nuclear arms race.

Given this uninspiring scenario, and despite the fact that this is merely a deliberative body, the Disarmament Commission has become a useful forum in which to build consensus in various areas of disarmament. It is in that same constructive spirit that we should now focus on the items that have been on its agenda for the last two years, namely, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms and ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament.

The delegation of Ecuador appreciates the patient efforts made to facilitate our discussions by the Chairpersons of Working Groups I and II. The non-paper drafted by Ms. Martinic of Argentina for Working Group II is an excellent foundation for making progress in the relevant agreements.

With regard to confidence-building, I would like to point out that Ecuador has already adopted bilateral measures with its two neighbouring States. At the regional level, Ecuador supports all inter-American instruments, and at the global level it respects the commitments undertaken within the Organization. In that connection, Ecuador has just transmitted to the Secretariat details of the legal measures it has adopted to prevent and curb any activity prohibited by the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Mines.

Permit me in conclusion, Madam Chairperson, to assure you of our complete cooperation in ensuring that the work of the Commission is crowned with success.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): Please allow me to begin, Madam, by offering you our warm congratulations on your election to the chair. I believe that under your able guidance, and aided by your wisdom and long experience on disarmament matters,

we will achieve much progress on the two important substantive issues before us. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

I would like also to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for sharing his reflections on the history and special context of the Disarmament Commission. As always, his statement served to put things in perspective and helped us start our work in a more focused manner.

Our own perspective is heavily influenced by the fact that experts have placed major flashpoints in today's world in my region, all of them with a decidedly nuclear dimension. Some of these flashpoints are in our immediate subregion of East Asia. Our perspective is also affected by the fact that all of the final nuclear test explosions in the last decade of the past century were conducted in my region.

When we include in our perspective the facts that there are still massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons and that military and defence policies continue to revolve around nuclear doctrines, coupled with recent developments that may have implications for the strategic nuclear balance, we are convinced that progress is our only option when the Commission revisits the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Nevertheless, there has been some progress in our quest for nuclear disarmament. The Millennium Summit reaffirmed the importance of eliminating nuclear weapons. The obligations enshrined in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) were reinforced during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, when States parties undertook an unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament and to taking practical steps in a systematic and progressive effort towards the abolition of nuclear armaments. As we continue our work in this Commission, we should build on those achievements.

We would like to thank the Chairman of Working Group I, on nuclear issues, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, for his excellent paper. His paper provides an outstanding basis for our work, and already we see the determination of many delegations to contribute to his paper. For our part, we would like to emphasize the following elements that should remain important parts of his paper: the early entry into force of and universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which the Philippines ratified this year; the maintenance of unilateral nuclear-test-ban commitments; the reinvigoration of the work of the Conference on Disarmament towards a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons; the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of a subsidiary body on nuclear disarmament; the realization of the obligation recognized by the International Court of Justice to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control; and the ratification of protocols to existing nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

With those elements in mind and recognizing the importance of reflecting the international consensus in favour of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Philippine delegation will actively participate in the Working Group on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

This year we will also continue our work on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. In that regard, we are thankful to the Chairperson of Working Group II, on that issue, Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for her revised paper and for her extensive efforts in consulting delegations on that paper. Her paper contains many of the elements that we believe are essential to confidence-building initiatives, and we believe that our work will be greatly aided by her efforts.

Our work on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms should build on the recognition that conditions and circumstances vary in each region and that each region has developed different approaches to this issue. However, fundamental principles should continue to guide us. One principle is that the excessive accumulation of conventional arms does not contribute to building confidence. Another is that the deployment of conventional forces in areas of tension or territorial disputes where there has been an understanding that parties should refrain from engaging in activities that might destabilize the situation could delay efforts at confidence-building. Thus, our work should reflect the need to move forward in recognizing the importance of confidence-building measures, which could include conventional disarmament or transparency measures, in order to create an atmosphere of trust, confidence and cooperation, where the possibility of the resort by States to the threat or use of force in international relations is reduced or eliminated.

The members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have taken a major step in building confidence in our region. In 1994, during the annual meeting of its Foreign Ministers, ASEAN established the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern and to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region. In the years since its establishment, the ARF has proven to be an effective consultative forum for promoting effective dialogue on political security cooperation in the region.

I believe that our discussions on confidence-building will prove to be an important and unparalleled opportunity for members of the international community to share their own unique bilateral or regional experiences on confidence-building. We look forward to a lively exchange of ideas and experiences and are confident that we shall all benefit from this exercise.

In closing, Madam Chairperson, please allow me to pledge to you the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission, and we wish you every success in your noble work.

The current session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place in a truly remarkable period for the United Nations. The decisions of the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Assembly created genuine preconditions for strengthening the central role of the United Nations in international affairs and for a significant enhancement of the world Organization's potential to regulate international relations and to coordinate cooperation in a multi-polar world. Today, through common effort, we must implement the decisions of the Millennium forums. That imperative can be fully applied to the sphere of disarmament. The Millennium Summit and the Millennium Assembly gave a powerful impetus to multilateral efforts in that area. The outcome of those efforts will provide a response to the central question of whether the twenty-first century will be a century of real disarmament.

The central place in the multilateral disarmament process still belongs to the United Nations, and in particular to its Disarmament Commission. In Russia's view, the Commission constitutes an important format for multilateral dialogue on key items on the international disarmament agenda.

What are the principal priorities in this area? Russia firmly believes that collectively ensuring strategic stability in the world is an essential condition for the stable and progressive development of the disarmament process. Today the notion of strategic stability is becoming ever more multidimensional, comprising a whole range of political, military, economic, humanitarian and ecological components. We are open to the broadest and most purposeful dialogue, including in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, concerning the choice of optimum ways of ensuring strategic stability.

Russia considers the total elimination of nuclear weapons one of the final goals of the disarmament process. We favour stage-by-stage, comprehensive movement in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, with the preservation of strategic stability and the participation of all nuclear Powers. The 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) defined specific steps in the field of nuclear disarmament. Fully aware of its responsibilities as a nuclear Power, Russia intends to implement the provisions of the Final Document of the Conference.

A new, specific step forward in strengthening the non-proliferation regime was the statement made by Vladimir Putin of Russia at the Millennium Summit on an initiative in support of the sustainable development of mankind and radical solutions for nuclear proliferation and environmental problems. We were pleased with the support given to this initiative at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the forty-fourth session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference. We attach great importance to the activities of the recently created task force on innovative nuclear reactors and fuel cycles. We feel it is necessary to pool the efforts of all countries concerned under the auspices of the IAEA in the framework of a relevant international project.

The specific programme of action in the field of nuclear disarmament formulated in President Putin's statement of 13 November 2001 measures aimed at strengthening strategic stability, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Russia is prepared to make further deep cuts in strategic defensive arms. We cannot see any reasons why there should be any obstacles to this. As a realizable objective for the radical reduction of strategic nuclear warheads in Russia and the United States, we propose to cut their levels down to 1,500 units for each party. This is not the limit. We are prepared to consider even lower levels.

In the current strategic situation in the world, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty plays a special role. Its signing in 1972 paved the way for the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms by the two greatest nuclear Powers. This process was made possible through the obligation the Soviet Union and the United States assumed under the Treaty to renounce deployment of national anti-missile systems or the development of the basis for such systems. The ABM Treaty still remains a cornerstone of strategic stability and a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive arms, as reflected in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The destruction of the ABM Treaty because of the United States' plans to deploy a national missile defence system would seriously affect global stability and international security. Only if the ABM Treaty is preserved and respected in its present form will it be possible to proceed with the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons in the framework of the START III process. Russia, which ratified START II in 2000, is prepared to open negotiations on a new START III treaty without delay.

Russia believes that priority should be given to political and diplomatic solutions to the problem of the nuclear threat. We have put forward an initiative to create a global missile and missile technology non-proliferation control system. The Russian proposals to this effect have won wide international support, as can be seen from the results of the international experts meetings on a global control system held in Moscow this year and last year, during the course of which it was found advisable to consider this issue under United Nations auspices. The preparation by the Secretary-General, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/33 A, of a report on the missile issue in all its aspects, to be discussed by the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, also serves this purpose. We attach great importance to the work to be done by the group of government experts in order to assist with the drafting of the report.

Russia regards possible the creation, as appropriate, of non-strategic region-wide ABM systems to neutralize and counter missile threats. Such systems could be created on a multilateral non-bloc basis, with the involvement of all the States concerned. We are all ready to cooperate in this field with all interested countries.

For us, as before, there is also the priority task of not allowing nuclear weapons into space. This is one of the most important factors for preserving international strategic stability and international security. The idea of the non-militarization of space enjoys the broad support of the international community and finds virtually unanimous political expression in General Assembly resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

An international conference on the prevention of the militarization of outer space, to be held in Moscow on 11 to 14 April 2001, offers great opportunities for building joint efforts by States concerned regarding the possible transformation of outer space into an area of military confrontation. This event is being held on the initiative of the President of Russia and is dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of the first manned flight in space.

We hope that the forum will give new impetus to discussions in the Conference on Disarmament on multilateral efforts for the establishment of a special committee on space with a negotiating mandate. Russia calls for the early development of an international legal regime that would prevent an arms race in space, prohibit the proliferation of weapons in space and ensure the observance of the principle of not using or threatening to use force from outer space. However, this work should in no way prevent other States from having access to the peaceful benefits of space.

Russia has always been committed to the disarmament process and to the strict fulfilment of its obligations in this area. Russia's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a specific example of this approach. Once again, we call upon other States — primarily the United States — on which the entry into force of the Treaty depends, to follow our example, thus allowing this important document to become universal nature and put an insurmountable barrier in the way of any attempts to proliferate nuclear weapons. Russia continues consistently to implement

unilateral initiatives in the sphere of tactical nuclear weapons.

We strongly believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world plays an important role in narrowing the geographic range of the presence of nuclear weapons. We welcome and encourage in every way possible this process, which would ultimately help us reach the goal of a nuclear-free world. In this respect, we feel it is appropriate to recall Russia's proposal that nuclear weapons should be concentrated within the territories of the nuclear States.

The United Nations is called upon to become one of the leading centres for discussing the problems of conventional arms. On the whole, we have a positive assessment of the functioning of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building instrument. We see its primary task as tracking possible destabilizing stockpiles of conventional arms. The Register is a global instrument that provides for the involvement of participating States on a voluntary and non-discriminatory basis. At the same time, radical measures to improve or change it could upset the balance of interests of many participants in the Register. Excessive transparency can damage the security of States and lead to a narrowing of the Register's geography, thereby reducing its effectiveness. That is why it is necessary to adopt a deliberate and balanced approach to increasing the level of transparency, which is not an end in itself and is designed to facilitate confidence-building in the military sphere.

Russia favours the development of broad international cooperation in curbing the illicit traffic in conventional arms, small arms and light weapons in particular, including through the interaction of national law enforcement, customs and licensing agencies. We believe that it would be appropriate to raise the question of the need to improve national legislations and regulations in the field of arms export control and to undertake possible further steps in the field of control in line with existing mechanisms. The latter include the Vienna and Wassenaar accords and the results of relevant activities within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and of government expert groups on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and on small arms and light weapons.

Moscow appreciates the fact that the United Nations Conference to be held this July is devoted to the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as the most urgent and pressing of issues. We hope that the Conference will facilitate the development of international cooperation in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We believe that the early entry into force of the adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security, will prove to be a contribution to strengthening this security. The process of ratifying this accord should be free from artificial delays and procrastination.

Russia attaches great importance to the scrupulous implementation of the 1999 Vienna Document and is prepared for the further improvement and development of confidence- and security-building measures within this accord. We feel that it is expedient to use the OSCE experience in strengthening confidence- and security-building measures in other regions of the world.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that Russia attaches great importance to the successful work of the Disarmament Commission. The session's agenda contains complex but exceptionally important disarmament issues. So far, there has been no unity in national approaches to these issues, but there is real potential for their significant rapprochement. The Russian delegation will continue its work to achieve this goal.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): It is a special pleasure for the Pakistan delegation and for me personally to extend our warm congratulations to you, Madam, on your well-deserved election as Chairperson of the Disarmament Commission at its 2001 substantive session. You can rest assured of the Pakistan delegation's full cooperation and support in making the session a success.

I also take this opportunity to convey, through you, our deep appreciation for the excellent work done by Dr. Javad Zarif as the Chairman of Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session.

As we enter the intermediate year of our three-year discussions on the substantive agenda of the Disarmament Commission, it is important for all of us to reiterate the importance we attach to this forum. Established at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Disarmament

Commission remains the sole deliberative forum on disarmament issues. The Commission also derives its importance from the fact that it is a multilateral forum on disarmament with universal membership. Countries big and small, powerful and weak, and with a variety of differing security concerns and agendas participate as equals in this forum to establish norms and principles which can help further promote objectives of disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission has a proud record of achievements over past years to prove its effectiveness and utility. Member States participating in the Commission have, through complex negotiations, drafted guidelines and recommendations which, though not legally binding, are of indispensable value in the evolution and strengthening of agreed norms of conduct for States in the areas of international security and disarmament. It is a measure of the Commission's effectiveness that, in the past few years, as the multilateral disarmament agenda has reached an impasse, it has produced two sets of guidelines in the vitally important areas of nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

If we keep in perspective these past successes and the intricacies and demands of reaching consensus in a forum with universal membership, we can surely make tangible progress in fulfilling our mandate. At the same time, it is of equal importance that member States shun the temptation to show excessive zeal in overburdening the work of the Disarmament Commission or introducing elements which are extraneous to our agenda.

The first item on the agenda, dealing with ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, is both timely and important. The consideration of this agenda item acquires even greater importance in view of the many setbacks suffered by the global disarmament agenda in the recent past. There is a growing feeling that this global nuclear disarmament framework is being eroded. Contrary to the high hopes generated at the end of the cold war, nuclear weapons retain their primacy in the security policies of the powerful States, while international politics take a more difficult and complex course. The possible abandonment of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems could well result in the unravelling of the agreements underpinning the whole system of multilateral disarmament.

We earnestly hope that, unencumbered by the demands and pressures of negotiating a legally binding instrument, our discussions on the agenda item will be more objective and fruitful. My delegation cannot approve of attempts to equate nuclear disarmament with non-proliferation. An excessive focus on non-proliferation cannot mask the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. As such, restricting the discussions on the first substantive agenda item to the so-called framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will not be acceptable to my delegation. If there is any framework needed, it is provided by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In the context of South Asia, history proves the reactive nature of Pakistan's nuclear programme. It was our neighbour in the East that introduced the nuclear factor into the South Asian security equation. We regret that South Asia went nuclear in spite of our serious efforts to prevent this. India's nuclear tests left us with no choice but to carry out our nuclear tests.

Pakistan wishes to seriously tackle the problems bedevilling peace and security in South Asia, especially the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. We are mindful of our responsibilities in a nuclearized South Asia. Instead of a triad of nuclear forces, Pakistan seeks a triad of peace, security and progress. To this end, Pakistan has offered to India the resumption of high-level talks between India and Pakistan to discuss and resolve the core dispute over Jammu and Kashmir; a strategic restraint regime involving measures for nuclear restraint and conventional balance; and high-level interaction for the promotion of trade, transit arrangements, development cooperation and investment generation.

My delegation looks forward to participating in discussions on agenda item 2 constructively and with an open mind. In the second year of discussions on this item, the Disarmament Commission should aim for a more detailed conceptual discussion on the entire variety of known confidence-building measures. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that symptomatic treatment and ad hoc recipes do not yield durable results. It will be important to distinguish between the disease and the symptoms, and to

acknowledge that confidence-building measures are not an end in themselves.

Discussions about confidence-building measures bring out the fact that they are region- and situation-specific. What has worked in one place need not be applicable elsewhere. No one model is complete in itself, nor can it be applied to any region in isolation from its geopolitical environment. We would thus caution against a prescriptive approach or an approach which attempts to universalize the confidence-building measures negotiated and agreed in the context of one specific region.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, my delegation once again assures you and the Bureau of its fullest cooperation in making our deliberations successful.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me start by congratulating you, Madam Chairperson, on your assumption of your duties to preside over this important body of the United Nations. I am sure that your diplomatic skill, coupled with the professional assistance of the Secretariat, will ensure a successful session for the Commission.

In no era of history have such collective efforts been under way to define and structure global and regional security arrangements. Today, all aspects of security issues are high on the international agenda and are widely deliberated and discussed by all States. The United Nations, which is a universal body established primarily to prevent the scourge of war, provides the best forum in that context for all States to deliberate upon common security and disarmament issues. In the same spirit, following the termination of the cold war, the United Nations has conducted discussions and negotiations at different levels that have resulted, in some respects, in preventing and restraining the arms race, thereby contributing to the enhancement of peace and security all over the world.

In that framework, the Disarmament Commission has served best to define and adopt relevant and essential guidelines related to different aspects of disarmament, which has led to a better common understanding of the evolving dynamic of international relations with regard to disarmament. It has also helped States to have a clearer vision of the foundations of the new international environment. The Commission's agenda this year, which is a continuation of the previous year's agenda, contains both highly relevant and substantive items for deliberation.

Nuclear disarmament is among the most essential issues, and a top priority within the whole international security and disarmament agenda. The devastating effects of the threat and use of nuclear weapons are now more than ever a source of major concern. The world community can in no way afford to witness a catastrophic incident of the use of such weapons, which can destroy mankind's civilizations. Practical measures and steps are therefore needed to abolish nuclear weapons at the earliest.

It is unfortunate that the expectations that existed at the end of the cold war were not fulfilled and that, to the contrary, some developments led some States to resort to old cold-war doctrines of balance of power and terror based on the capability to destroy an adversary. Nuclear disarmament, a lofty goal of humanity, is now perceived by some as only a utopia and a state beyond our reach. This is totally in contravention of the principles and objectives of the disarmament charter of 1978 and other instruments, decisions and guidelines of different organs of the United Nations — including the General Assembly — that through numerous resolutions have called for the adoption of specific measures to increasingly de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons and to destroy them under effective international control. In this connection, both the new confrontation over missile defence schemes and the introduction of an arms race into outer space are a matter of great concern and have consequences for the strategic stability and negative effects on disarmament treaties, negotiations and initiatives.

Following intensive deliberations, the Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was able to agree, on the basis of article VI of the Treaty, on a framework containing certain specific measures towards nuclear disarmament. This awaits implementation. The Conference also made important decisions and contributions regarding regional initiatives, particularly with respect to the special situation in the Middle East and the nuclear threat of Israel. Through that decision, the international community expressed its concern over unsafeguarded nuclear facilities in the region.

Now the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to abolish nuclear weapons should be seen as an important and tangible undertaking for nuclear disarmament, which requires the adoption of practical measures, particularly by nuclear-weapon States. The Commission's agenda item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" is therefore highly appropriate for full and extensive deliberation at this juncture. The Commission is expected to contribute to this crucial and vital international security question by introducing practical steps to achieve nuclear disarmament. The high standing within the United Nations of this body — which, as the specialized universal deliberating forum on disarmament issues, provides for the participation of all States and which takes its decisions by consensus — can help it contribute effectively to the advancement of nuclear disarmament.

The second substantive item on the Commission's agenda this year, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", is another area of great importance. In many instances, conflicts and tension between States have been exacerbated by the increasing flow of conventional arms into the regions in question. The introduction of sophisticated arms, particularly into sensitive regions of the world, has in several instances caused miscalculations and has resulted in long-term conflicts. In certain cases, increased conventional arms capabilities have caused the emergence of a new cycle of the arms race in the field of conventional weapons at the global and regional levels.

Moreover, mistrust and suspicion create an atmosphere of insecurity among States within regions and lead States to resort to accumulating arms because of that suspicion and to protect their national interests, as well as for self-defence. The interrelationship between building confidence and reliance on conventional arms is therefore an essential element which needs to be taken into consideration in the process of consolidating peace and initiating efforts to contain crises and tensions and to prevent them from becoming deadly warfare.

More recently, particularly within the micro-disarmament field, some aspects of conventional arms and the role of confidence-building measures have been highlighted and have been the subject of broad-based universal deliberations. Small arms and the illicit traffic in such arms are now the focus of the international community's attention; about a week ago, in this very room, States Members of the United Nations adopted the report of the Preparatory Committee for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. Practical confidence-building measures are one of the main elements of the wide range of identified practical measures required to curb illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Confidence-building measures have also been highlighted in various United Nations resolutions related to regional disarmament and security initiatives; it would be useful to look at all of these with great care and interest.

The Disarmament Commission needs to take stock of measures identified in appropriate areas related to conventional arms and to use them as valuable resources to structure its guidelines and principles governing the introduction of confidence-building measures in this domain.

Since last year, under the guidance of the Chairpersons of its two Working Groups, the Disarmament Commission has embarked upon identifying and deliberating on various aspects of its two substantive agenda items, on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. I take this opportunity to thank the Working Group Chairpersons and to congratulate them on their hard work and on the papers they introduced to structure the discussions. This year, I am sure we will go further in providing a sound basis for furthering the work in those two areas. Here, Madam Chairperson, I believe your diplomatic experience and the active participation of all members of the Commission will be important assets helping us to achieve our purposes at this session.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): My delegation congratulates you, Madam, on your election to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission at its 2001 session; we are convinced that your able guidance will direct our discussions to a successful conclusion at this session.

The two substantive items that the Disarmament Commission has been discussing in depth since last year are important and relevant. They are "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". The recommendations that the Commission will make next year at the conclusion of

its three-year-long discussion will indeed be of great value to all Member States in framing their policies on disarmament, both nuclear and conventional.

The efforts made towards achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament have been characterized by ups and downs. Notwithstanding this, the history of nuclear disarmament is not without concrete results. The sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was able to produce a consensus final document which set out a number of practical ways to achieve nuclear disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is being signed and ratified by an increasing number of countries. The historic Millennium Summit provided clear guidelines with respect to striving for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. We should leave no stone unturned in acting in the millennium spirit, and we should endeavour to build on the success of the NPT Review Conference. In that vein, the nuclear-weapon States should fulfil the undertaking they made during that Conference to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

The progress achieved so far in the field of nuclear disarmament is far from satisfactory. There are still some countries that are not parties to the NPT; their inclusion would strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. The Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral United Nations negotiating arm in the sphere of disarmament, has been paralysed for more than three years, and has failed to agree on a programme of work. Negotiations on important treaties such as a fissile material cut-off treaty, on preventing an arms race in outer space, et cetera, have been stalled. START II has not been implemented. The CTBT has not been ratified by the 11 more countries whose ratification is required for the Treaty to come into effect.

Under such circumstances, the role of this session of the Disarmament Commission becomes more important. Frank discussions, which are the hallmark of the Commission's sessions without the constraints of a treaty-negotiating framework, can prove very useful in narrowing differences and in paving the way towards concrete results and valuable practical recommendations. The Disarmament Commission is the forum that is most accessible to all Member States. It is where each and every United Nations Member can candidly deliberate issues of both nuclear and conventional armaments. Member States can identify ways and means to promote nuclear disarmament and can discuss any issues conducive to the emergence of consensus.

The outcomes of the Commission's last few sessions have been impressive. The 1999 session in particular was able to produce a set of guidelines concerning the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which have proved very useful in drafting relevant resolutions in the First Committee of the General Assembly.

No less importance can be attached to the conventional arms issue in the light of the devastating impact the use of such weapons has created, resulting in the massive loss of human life. During the cold-war era, an estimated 5 million people died because of armed conflicts involving conventional weapons. It is little wonder that the Millennium Declaration mentions the problem of small arms and light weapons as an issue that poses as serious a challenge to the security of humankind as do nuclear weapons.

Considering this reality, the theme the Disarmament Commission has chosen for discussion — practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — seems only appropriate. Confidence-building measures are very effective tools both for preventing conflicts and for building peace in post-conflict situations. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an innovation in this area. This Register needs to be expanded and deepened to enhance its effectiveness. A standardized reporting instrument for military expenditures can make very useful contributions to promoting transparency and then building confidence among States.

Confidence-building measures can indeed be beneficial in the fields of both nuclear and conventional armaments. It is in this context that we appreciate the endeavours undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific at Kathmandu, which recently organized an annual meeting devoted to "Prospects for future confidence-building".

The significance of the Disarmament Commission should never be underestimated. It always provides a useful forum to the general membership of the United Nations to discuss thoroughly the disarmament issues before the international community. Since its establishment in 1952 the Disarmament Commission

has been giving valuable and practical recommendations to facilitate negotiations among States to enter into bilateral and multilateral treaties for arms control. It is only hoped that the current session will be another major step in that noble task.

Mrs. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): Allow me to add my congratulations to those already addressed to you, Madam Chairperson, on your election as Chairperson of the 2001 session of the Disarmament Commission and to express my confidence that under your skilful leadership substantive progress will be made in dealing with its two agenda items. I would also like to extend our felicitations to other members of the Bureau of the Commission on their election to such honourable posts.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would also like to thank Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, for his relentless efforts aimed at the success of the Commission's work, and also thank Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive statement covering all major aspects of the Commission's activities.

The Disarmament Commission at its current session will continue discussions on the two agenda items "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", having at our disposal two working documents that provide a good basis for conducting constructive and productive deliberations. In this regard, you, Madam Chairperson, as well as the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, can fully rely on active cooperation and support from my delegation.

This year the Republic of Kazakhstan will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of its independence. Analysing the past and looking ahead, Kazakhstan is striving to contribute to the work of United Nations, especially in the field of disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the maintenance of global security.

Kazakhstan proved its adherence to the process of freeing the world from nuclear weapons by joining the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1993 as a non-nuclear State. After the withdrawal of the last nuclear warhead from its territory in April 1995, and the elimination of the remaining nuclear device at the Semipalatinsk test site on 31 May 1995, Kazakhstan became a State that voluntarily refused to possess nuclear weapons. This positive contribution of my Republic to the field of disarmament was reflected in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Last year, along with Belarus and Ukraine, we submitted to the Commission a working paper in this regard.

On the other hand, we fully share the idea expressed by Mr. Dhanapala in his statement at the 242nd meeting:

> "And, yet, because the NPT is not yet a universal Treaty, it is vitally important for the world community to continue its determined efforts to discover the ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament as soon as possible. The Commission has a unique role to play in this regard."

Proceeding from the need to fully strengthen the non-proliferation regime, Kazakhstan signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996. It is the strong intention of my Government to ratify the CTBT before the forthcoming Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in September 2001. Nowadays my country practically and systematically participates in the work on increasing the efficiency of control over the observance of the CTBT provisions.

On 29 July 2000, the last nuclear-weapon-test grove number 160, in the Degelen mountains in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, was put out of action. It was the third calibration experiment made on a range as part of a series of Kazakh-American experiments and was simultaneously used for checking and for the calibration of the International Monitoring System for conducting nuclear tests created within the framework of CTBT.

Kazakhstan, attaching paramount importance to the process of maintaining peace and stability at a regional level, and thus at a global level, gives great attention to the realization of the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are confident that such a zone in Central Asia and in other regions will constitute an important step towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting general and complete disarmament. Kazakhstan will further continue to participate consistently and constructively in the work carried out to establish this zone.

Pursuing a policy of constructive cooperation, Kazakhstan has created a belt of security and good neighbourliness along its borders. Along with China, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, within the "Shanghai 5" framework and through consultation and cooperation on an equal footing, Kazakhstan signed the Agreement on Confidence-building in the Military Field in the Border Areas and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas.

My country, consistently acting for the creation of security structures on the Asian continent and fully abiding by its commitments to important international instruments, is continuing to work on the implementation of the initiative put forward by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly in 1992 on the convening of a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), aimed at strengthening stability and security in Asia and at creating an effective cooperation mechanism.

It is not an easy task, but looking back at the path that has been engaged since 1992, we note with satisfaction that some progress has been made. This initiative is taking real shape now and becoming a tangible factor in contemporary international life. For the information of delegations, I would like to note that the participants of the CICA process are 15 member States, five observer States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. On the eve of the summit of the CICA heads of State and Government, scheduled for the fall of this year, a new draft of the summit document was discussed at the Special Working Group meeting from 26 to 31 March in Almaty. In June, the second Special Working Group meeting will be held to continue the finalization of the draft.

Given the results of negotiations held in the capitals of the States members of the CICA process, my country believes that the CICA summit document should reflect three major aspects of cooperation: joint activities to combat new threats — mainly terrorism, separatism, extremism, illegal drugs and weapons trafficking; a concept of the regional mechanism for the elaboration and application of confidence-building measures in their broader sense; and the institutionalization of the CICA structure, including a secretariat, regular meetings, financing, rules of procedure and the development of scientific potential. All three aspects are supported by the member States and represent a good basis for elaborating a well-balanced summit document and for implementation in the future.

My country is convinced that the CICA initiative has a rational kernel and calls on the United Nations and the Asian States to continue their support of the CICA process in the interests of Asian and global security.

Transparency in the field of control and the reduction of conventional arms provides a good basis for preventing a destabilizing build-up of weapons in any region or an excessive concentration of weapons in any State. Kazakhstan supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It has provided information on a regular basis since 1992 and considers the Register to be the most important component of such control. We also welcome the broadest participation of States Members of the United Nations in the functioning of this important international instrument.

In considering practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, the Disarmament Commission at the current session should take due cognizance of the preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in July 2001. In this regard, my delegation wishes to support the draft programme of action prepared by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for that Conference. We are of the view that our deliberations at this session should support the draft programme of action without complicating progress.

My delegation reiterates its support for the non-paper on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, proposed by the Chairperson of Working Group II, which is a good basis for our further deliberations.

Finally, I would like once again to assure you, Madam, of our full support for the efforts aimed at ensuring the success of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We are ready to strengthen cooperation with all the delegations of member States to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Osei (Ghana): It gives my delegation great satisfaction to see you, Madam, presiding over the 2001 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I

therefore wish to congratulate you on your election and to commend the able manner in which you have so far conducted our meetings. Let me also assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our support throughout our session.

Allow me to extend, through you, to the delegation of Iran our appreciation for the good work and effective and efficient manner in which your predecessor, Mr. Javad Zarif, conducted our affairs when we met last year.

As we all anticipated, the statement of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, was detailed, incisive and indeed thought-provoking, compelling us all to reflect on how best we can contribute to or engage in the work of the Commission as it seeks to influence the disarmament machinery in a meaningful manner that sustains the hope and aspirations of the international community for a world free of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons that threaten or undermine the striving of many people to attain a reasonable and decent standard of development.

These aspirations were heightened by our political leaders when they met in New York for the Millennium Summit and resolved to seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. The Commission, in this regard, can do no less than remain positively engaged in the process of identifying ways and means to achieve disarmament, and also identify confidence-building measures to galvanize the necessary support for the work ahead. In this regard, my delegation feels that we must all eschew complacency and resolve to work assiduously on the basis of our leaders' commitment to ensure progress at the end of this session.

As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Ghana is committed to its obligations therein and considers the positive conclusions of the sixth Review Conference as relevant to the process of achieving nuclear disarmament. For my delegation, the Treaty remains the bedrock of the multilateral disarmament process and the Commission should consider innovative ways of encouraging all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their obligations, as stipulated in article VI of the Treaty. These States made an

> "unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament" (*NPT/CONF.2000/28* (Part I), *article VI, para. 15 (6)*)

and the Commission can do no less than urge them to engage in good faith in negotiations towards the attainment of that objective. Thus, in this connection, our deliberations should consider ways in which the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating body for disarmament, can be assisted in reaching consensus on its working agenda and thereby in overcoming its current inertia. We feel that identifying acceptable language on all these elements should indeed help us to make progress in the work of this session.

The menace posed by conventional weapons is another area of concern to my delegation. It is important, as we deliberate, to keep in mind the resolve expressed by our leaders at the Summit to take concerted action to prevent the illegal traffic in small arms and light weapons, especially by creating greater transparency in arms transfers and supporting regional disarmament measures. Having just concluded the preparatory process for the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, my delegation believes that our work now should complement the work done in the Preparatory Committee by highlighting such mechanisms as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a way of assuring affected countries or regions of our desire to contribute to national, regional and — hopefully — international initiatives to curb these harmful trends. Consideration should therefore be given to the expansion of the Register to cover all types of conventional weapons, in a bid to engender greater transparency.

Ghana also supports the existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the concept underlying their establishment and existence in some regions and the need to explore how to ensure their wider application, on the basis of the principles established by the Commission at its 1999 session. We are particularly heartened to have been informed at this session of the ratification by the United Kingdom of two protocols to the Treaty of Pelindaba. In our view, that is an indication of that country's commitment to the Treaty's wider application and relevance to the disarmament process. Needless to say, this is an initiative that should commend itself to other nuclear-weapon countries.

The revised non-paper by the Chairperson of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, is recommended as a good basis for a further, and more meaningful, exchange of views on that item. Hopefully, this will ensure progress on that front. My delegation also welcomes the tireless efforts of the Chairperson of Working Group II on agenda item 5, confidence-building measures. We appreciate in particular her efforts to consult widely and to present an informal working paper outlining elements and a structure that will, no doubt, stimulate healthy interaction on the issues. Here, again, my delegation would be happy to proceed on that basis.

The two agenda items for our consideration highlight issues that have a tremendous impact on efforts to maintain international peace and security. My delegation believes that we all have an obligation to build on the commitment of our leaders by engaging actively in the deliberations to sustain the progress that we made at our first session. The Disarmament Commission must continue to prove itself relevant to efforts towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, let me once again assure you of my delegation's cooperation and wish you well in your endeavours.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like first of all to congratulate you, Madam Chairperson, and the new members of the Bureau on your election. We wish you every success in the discharge of your duties. We are convinced, Madam Chairperson, that you will make every possible effort to reach the goals of our substantive session. My delegation would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Javad Zarif, for the efforts he made in the year 2000 during the Commission's previous session. I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for the statement he delivered yesterday.

This negotiating body is meeting today to examine, for a second year, two essential points: ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. On this occasion, my delegation would like to thank the Chairpersons of the Working Groups — Mr. Osei of Ghana and Ms. Martinic of Argentina — for their efforts in drafting the working papers on the two items under discussion.

Despite the importance of the second item, on confidence-building measures, the first item on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament has special importance, given the extremely severe effects of deadly nuclear weapons and their impact on humanity in general. With regard to the first item, we all agree that the objective of the international community is the total elimination of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. We are convinced that our efforts in that regard should be based on the following.

First is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and in particular its article VI, which provides that every State party undertakes to carry out negotiations in good faith to adopt effective measures to end the nuclear arms race as soon as possible, to carry out nuclear disarmament and to implement a comprehensive disarmament system under strict and effective international control.

Second is the framework established by the Final Document of the 1978 General Assembly special session on disarmament, in which the question of nuclear disarmament was the top priority in the field of disarmament. With regard to efforts that must be made by States and organizations in the area of disarmament, paragraph 50 invites States to begin immediate negotiations to end the qualitative development of nuclear weapons with regard to their manufacture, their delivery systems, and fissile materials for military uses. The same paragraph also invites us to establish a timetable for a programme to achieve as soon as possible a balanced reduction of nuclear arsenals and their delivery systems with a view to the final and total elimination of these weapons.

Thirdly, let me refer to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which was adopted unanimously by all the judges, who represent the world's diverse legal systems. In that opinion, the Court rendered the following decision: that all States have the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. The Court's advisory opinion backed the Final Document adopted by the General Assembly in 1978 at its tenth special session, which called on all States, especially nuclear States, to commit themselves to undertaking negotiations leading

to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict international control.

Fourthly, the decisions and guidelines of the Disarmament Commission, in particular its 1999 recommendations, and the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly — most recently resolution 55/33 — all make reference to the international community's commitment to the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Fifthly, I would also make mention of the work of the Conference on Disarmament towards facilitating negotiations on the achievement of complete nuclear disarmament.

Beyond the fact that there are conventions to ban the use of certain kinds of weapons, the conscience of mankind itself prohibits the use of nuclear weapons anywhere. The use of such weapons is prohibited by all religions, whatever their principles or world views. Respect for the supreme worth of the human person must not be jeopardized by the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. That is why disarmament must be a universal human goal; we should do our utmost to save succeeding generations from tragedies like those of the past, irrespective of the reasons and justifications behind them. Nothing can justify mass destruction that does not distinguish between civilians — women, children and the elderly — and combatants. Hence, the best guarantee that we will avoid repeating past tragedies and prevent the future use of these inhumane weapons is to make serious efforts to attain worldwide nuclear disarmament.

The climate of the cold war may have justified, in some people's minds, the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. That era is past, but we nonetheless note that some continue blatantly to arm themselves and to pursue policies based on a double standard and selective policies on the implementation of international commitments, and to search for pretexts and justifications to wriggle out of commitments they have already undertaken.

Among the gravest problems facing the world is the double standard applied by certain States: some countries are prohibited from defending themselves against attack by aggressors – attacks carried out in full view of the world; these defenceless countries are forbidden to purchase what they need for everyday civilian life. At the same time, other States are permitted to do what they please, flouting international documents and resolutions; they have free rein to trample upon resolutions that have been adopted, by producing the most sophisticated conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, those countries establish laboratories and research centres for the production of the most sophisticated and destructive weaponry.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) forbids all States to export nuclear technology to other countries. But what is the situation when nuclear technology is exported to a State that is not a party to the NPT and that refuses to place its nuclear installations and its nuclear weapons under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)? That State refuses to comply with United Nations resolutions and decisions and continues to develop its nuclear arsenal with the assistance of the world's strongest Power.

Iraq attaches great importance to the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and to making a greater effort to reach consensus on the agenda and objectives of that session, especially since we have witnessed great developments in disarmament since the tenth special session, devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. Iraq regrets the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to carry out substantive negotiations on the establishment of an ad hoc committee specifically to consider the complete and final elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this context, Iraq wishes to stress the importance of the creation of zones free of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world and considers this a significant way to achieve global and comprehensive nuclear disarmament. In this regard, my country was among the first to advocate the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the principle of accession to the international treaty banning the manufacture and proliferation of this weapons system.

Despite the accession of the Arab countries to the NPT, Israel remains the only anomalous case in the region, having refused to accede to this Treaty and to submit its installations to verification and control safeguards, despite the fact that it possesses the largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the region.

Given the aforementioned and developments of recent years, we are concerned. Although years have passed since the conclusion of the NPT, gains made until now have been modest and the nuclear States have not adopted any practical measures to implement recent commitments. To the contrary, a nuclear State, the State possessing the largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world — the United States — continues to reject its binding legal obligations according to relevant conventions and international instruments. It continues to disavow all responsibility under the ABM Treaty and continues to practice nuclear deterrence. It is pursing a much more intense arms race, contrary to the ethics of relations between States and the Charter; we all know that the arms race can only entail destruction, poverty and backwardness for mankind. International conventions and treaties are the basis of the obligations and commitments of States. The principles and norms that States have adopted do not free them from respecting their commitments.

Regarding the second point, the Iraqi delegation wishes to emphasize the following points. First, any proposal relating to conventional weapons should take into consideration the specific nature of each region and its domestic conflicts and should emphasize the principles of the Charter: the sovereignty of States and their territorial integrity, and their right to national self-defence. We note today that the main problem that the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms faces stems from the fact that it is limited, that it relates to seven categories of weapons only and that it does not even cover more destructive weapons. That is why participation in the Register cannot be guaranteed.

With regard to the Middle East region, a special case, there is an absence of qualitative balance in the area of conventional weapons because the application of transparency to the seven categories of conventional weapons — while disregarding other more complex weapons and weapons systems, such as nuclear weapons — is an imbalanced approach which can be described as non-global, and therefore it cannot achieve the Register's original goal. If we need to guarantee transparency with regard to conventional weapons as a means of strengthening international peace and security, we follow basic specific guidelines that are balanced, comprehensive and non-discriminating. Thus, this item should not be separated from other points linked to disarmament, in view of the close relationship and interdependency between the various items on the agenda.

Secondly, as we consider this issue, we must refrain from addressing matters that are unrelated to disarmament, because that could make the situation far more difficult and could complicate our task. That is why we would like proposals to be more realistic.

We should not lose sight of our vision of the future. Our purpose, as stated in the Charter, is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Those generations will never forgive us if we fail to achieve that purpose.

The Chairperson: The representative of the United States has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind delegations that first statements in exercise of the right of reply should not exceed 10 minutes. I call on the representative of the United States.

Mr. Grey (United States of America): Before I exercise my right of reply, I want to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chair. I really do not know why chairmen or chairwomen are routinely congratulated on taking on such a difficult task, but I suspect the practice comes from the parliamentary heritage both our countries share. In the old days, Speakers of the British House of Commons were dragged forward to the Chair by fellow members and were often in considerable personal peril when they attempted to carry out their constitutional responsibilities. Fortunately, we live in happier and less perilous times today, and I am quite certain that there are no representatives of the House of Stuart lurking outside the chamber to arrest you, Madam. But in any event, I congratulate you on your assumption of your responsibilities, and I will cooperate with you in every way.

The United States delegation regrets that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea misrepresented and distorted the policies of the United States when he spoke this morning. In a democratic republic of the kind we Americans are privileged to have, citizens elect their representatives and leaders, and any newly elected United States Government has the duty to review existing policies and proposals to ensure that the nation's business is conducted in the spirit of the mandate that the people have chosen to give it through our constitutional processes.

The new United States Administration is currently carrying out a thorough review of United States policies related to security, defence, arms control and disarmament. Policies of the United States related to international peace and security on the Korean peninsula are included in that review. In close cooperation with the Republic of Korea, we look forward to future discussions with appropriate officials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at times and places that will be worked out in the future.

Under the circumstances, it appears to us to be inappropriate to call into question or attempt to prejudge the outcome of the United States Government's policy review. It is even more inappropriate to threaten countermeasures that could "have no limit in their scope and depth" (A/CN.10/PV.244). That semantic overkill and those intemperate remarks clearly conflict with the role and responsibility of the Disarmament Commission to promote international peace and security.

The Chairperson: The two Working Groups will begin their work tomorrow morning, and I should like to wish the Chairpersons of the Working Groups, Mr. Osei and Ms. Martinic, every success. I encourage all members to work towards constructive consensus-building as we embark on this next stage of our work.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.